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NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY 1890—

A PROGRESS REPORT

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So many years have passed since the first steps in the compilation of a retrospective "complete" national bibliography were taken in 1946 that, in default of the finished work, it has been suggested that an interim report might be of interest. Specimen pages were handed round at a Conference Session in 1955, but as the work is now slowly reaching the stage where a provisional check-list will be typed, an extended note may be of some interest.

I. BACKGROUND AND PLAN

A bibliography of books and pamphlets is but one section of a full national bibliography—doubtless the most important, but certainly

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not the only one. Eventually there will need to be bibliographies of our serials, including newspapers, maps, music and other material. Work on these, together with the compilation of various indexes now seen to be necessary, will certainly occupy librarians and others for at least another fifty years.

In the continuing reminders we receive of our indebtedness to the private labours of Dr T. M. Hocken, there is usually a second or two to note the lack of anything to fill the gap in the growing span of years from his death. Without overlooking entirely the interim usefulness of various supplements and selective bibliographies, it is fair to say that no cumulation of the years since 1910 had been attempted when we began, although stimulating suggestions to this effect had been made at various times.

It was decided then that the National Centre should compile such a record, the Books Resources Committee of the N.Z.L.A. giving its formal approval in August 1948.

The bibliography was planned originally to cover both the Hocken period and the succeeding years. Some months of work, however, early prompted the much wiser decision to concentrate on the recent gap. Because of the obviously thin coverage in the last years of Hocken, the starting point was first made 1900. However, further research showed that there were many significant omissions in the last ten years of the nineteenth century and, encouraged by the knowledge also that 1890 is historically a more logical division, the date was pushed back to 1890. It was originally intended to finish the entries with 1950, but 1960 is upon us and the entries for the ten years involved are readily available and may conveniently be included at the appropriate stage.

What is to be done for the Hocken period? Three courses of action at least may be considered:

- (i) The bibliography could be reprinted with a supplement of known omissions.
- (ii) The reprint could be undertaken to 1889 (p. 402) thus omitting the sections in the National Centre bibliography with the Maori section covered by Williams.
- (iii) The period could be covered afresh on the same lines as the 1890- work when that is completed.

This last possibility is the one I most strongly prefer. Sentiment apart, the range of Hocken's annotations and the standing of the work itself demand that it should not be chopped about to suit our convenience. A reprint of a now admittedly incomplete work, however, would be expensive, particularly with the necessary supplement.

2. PUBLICATION

Detailed consideration of the method and form of entry in publication is still premature, but it can be said that the work will be in two parts, a numbered alphabetical sequence of main entries and a second part of added subject and form entries.

3. SCOPE

The bibliography will include all New Zealand books and pamphlets which can be traced as having been published between 1890 and 1960. A New Zealand work is regarded as being:

- (i) Any title *first* published in New Zealand, regardless of its subject matter.
- (ii) Any title published overseas dealing wholly or in part with New Zealand.
- (iii) Any title written by a resident New Zealander.

Works published overseas by writers who have spent only part of their lives in New Zealand will be included if the work in subject or treatment in some way reflects the New Zealand scene. Titles technically outside scope written by authors with a substantial body of New Zealand writing as defined above will be indicated by italicised entries giving title and date of publication only.

The following categories have been excluded:

- (i) Rules, constitutions and regulations of societies and institutions, private and official, except that rules of certain ad hoc bodies of a temporary character have been included.
- (ii) Price lists, sale catalogues and advertising brochures.
- (iii) Slight publicity material, *but* publicity material and prospectuses giving information about business firms is included.
- (iv) Reprints in New Zealand of works first published overseas, unless of specific N.Z. content.
- (v) Primary and secondary school texts.
- (vi) Minor juvenile material and picture books.
- (vii) Election leaflets when clearly identifiable as such.
- (viii) Notices and broadsides.
- (ix) Programmes, orders of service, prayers, catechisms and religious study material.

Reprints from periodicals and newspapers are included, except reprints from New Zealand serials other than newspapers. Offprints are outside scope. Added entries are being made for all monographs issued as part of series and it is intended that the entries for major series which are not largely reprints should give a complete record of the individual titles in the series.

4. FORM OF ENTRY

The form of entry is basically that of a standard Library of Congress catalogue card, cataloguing following the 1941 A.L.A. Preliminary Rules with a few significant variations, some of which may be noted here:

- (i) The starting point of all works in two or more edition is the first edition, regardless of whether it was published in the period or not. All entries, therefore, for Grey's *Polynesian mythology*, Acland's *Canterbury runs* and Hopkins's *Practical*

beekeeping run on from the first edition as part of the main entry regardless of change of title.

- (ii) Entries for corporate authors are to be made under the form of name used at the time of publication. After much thought and discussion this decision has been finally taken. The necessary cross references for earlier and later forms will, of course, be given.
- (iii) Rules for collation, including the description of unpagged matter and illustrations have been amended to permit the description to enable one to determine whether or not a particular book is complete or otherwise. Perhaps inconsistently we have not extended this modification to include advertising matter not in the text, but the great majority of New Zealand works with additional advertising matter are not in any sense comparable to the first editions of the northern hemisphere where bibliographic importance pertains to issues with or without advertisements.

5. METHOD OF COMPILATION

The first step was to prepare a provisional working file from a consolidation of Copyright Publications, Johnstone, Annals of New Zealand Literature, Union Catalogue entries, etc. From these "final" entries have been prepared from an examination of individual copies. This has been done, firstly, from N.L.S. stock in H.Q. and an accessible private collection, after which the Alexander Turnbull Library, where there are still some pockets of resistance to be included, was checked; at the present time we are about two-thirds of the way through the General Assembly Library collection. Some complete series of departmental publications have also been included. Union catalogue notifications from libraries with significant New Zealand collections have been checked regularly and unrecorded titles added to the rough file. Considerable assistance has been given over the years by many Library School students, who, as part of their bibliographical projects, have been able to deal with more or less self-contained sections and so provide a basis for final checking by myself and others.

6. NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY AS A UNION CATALOGUE

The possibility of making the National Bibliography serve as a Union Catalogue was appreciated from an early stage. At the outset it was proposed that holdings should be given only for titles published before 1900. There would, however, be advantages in giving a limited number of holdings on a regional basis, and, in the case of title apparently held only in one or two libraries, to indicate accordingly. A final decision has not yet been made.

7. CHECKING STAGES AND REMAINING EDITORIAL WORK

Work is still at the stage of large-scale netting although naturally the fish being caught are smaller and the examination to determine their status and antecedents takes longer. So far as can be anticipated at present the remaining steps are:

- (i) Completion of Wellington libraries to stage of final entry and typing of check list after temporary merging of final provisional files.
- (ii) Checking of holding in other centres.
- (iii) Editorial revision and research on biographical details, pseudonyms, and undated works, etc.
- (iv) Preparation of text for publication.

8. GENERAL COMMENTS

(i) Claims to completeness must be regarded as relative. Apart from the obvious need for editorial judgment in selection, however carefully provisions regarding scope are drawn up, much will inadvertently be missed. It can only be hoped that the proportion will be less, or certainly no greater than in other comparable works.

(ii) As befits one who spent the first four years of his professional career in the Turnbull Library, there was at the outset a natural predisposition to regard our national collections as virtually complete. Without the existence of these collections the task of compilation would have been much more difficult and even more protracted than it has been, but the Alexander Turnbull and the General Assembly Libraries greatly though they complement each other, still have many omissions, particularly of first or early editions of bread and butter lines, the legal text books, the well-known gardening manuals.

In concluding this report, thanks are expressed to the libraries which have so far permitted their shelves to be ransacked and to the many librarians and others who have assisted in one way or another to date. Anticipatory thanks may also be extended to the other libraries still to be checked and to individuals ready to assist in one way or another.